

VZCZCXRO4804
PP RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKH #0954/01 1791026

ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 271026Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1174
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000954

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/27/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL KPKO UN AU SU

SUBJECT: CABINET AFFAIRS MINISTER PAGAN AMUM SAYS HE WILL LEAVE POST WITHIN WEEKS

REF: A. KHARTOUM 944
1B. KHARTOUM 941

Classified By: CDA Alberto M.Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: SPLM Secretary General and current GNU Minister of Cabinet Affairs Pagan Amum told CDA June 25 that he will leave his post as Cabinet Minister "within two weeks." Lam Akol is the candidate most likely to replace him, according to Amum, for lack of other good options in the SPLM. Amum believes the NCP will drag out final resolution of Abyei and broader border demarcation until 2011, to "buy time" and delay movement toward secession in order to "keep the South under control and exploit oil resources." Amum believes the NCP will implement the June 8 Abyei agreement, however, and said that SE Williamson's sudden departure from Khartoum during negotiations likely scared the NCP into signing. Amum said the SPLM is "healthier and more united" following the SPLM convention and that his relations with Chairman Salva Kiir have improved. Amum urged tangible US support for an alliance against the NCP in national elections. End summary.

¶2. (C) At the end of a relaxed meeting with CDA Fernandez discussing the latest developments in Abyei and CPA implementation, Minister of Cabinet Affairs Pagan Amum casually announced, almost as an afterthought, that he plans to leave his post in the GNU "within two weeks" and plans to focus on his role in the SPLM. Amum did not provide a specific reason for his departure, but said he had discussed the decision at length with SPLM Chairman Salva Kiir. (Note: All of the SPLM officials in Khartoum complain that they would rather not be here due to the difficulty of working with the regime. Recently Amum has been even more outspoken than normal in Khartoum, attending a rally against press censorship and criticizing the regime heavily as corrupt and a failure - Ref A. End note.) Amum noted that there are few options for senior SPLM figures who could take his place and said that Kiir approached Nhial Deng to ask if he would take the position, and Deng reportedly refused. Amum said Lam Akol is the candidate most likely to replace him due to the lack of options and the fact that the candidate must be of a certain political "weight." He noted that Lam has improved his relationship with Kiir recently but is not trusted by anyone in the SPLM leadership, "he thinks the NCP will win in the end and he acts accordingly."

¶3. (C) Amum said that despite the recent agreement on Abyei, which the regime only signed due to the intense pressure of the Omdurman attack, SE Williamson's sudden departure and the simultaneous UNSC visit, the NCP has made a strategic decision not to make progress on border demarcation or Abyei. The NCP's objective is to "create a situation that will force the SPLM to consider postponing the referendum," said

Amum. Amum said the NCP's "plan A" is to fix the elections and then write the rules for the referendum with a new alignment of political forces in Khartoum. Plan B is simply to destabilize the South by weakening the SPLM and by delaying progress on CPA requirements such as border demarcation. Amum described a scenario in which the NCP continues to sign agreement after agreement, partially implementing each one to demonstrate progress, but endlessly negotiating and holding onto power for "at least another 20 years." Amum observed that the NCP's primary objective is to hold onto power, which requires access to the oil wealth in the South. In the short term, Amum believes that the NCP will implement most aspects of the June 8 Abyei agreement. Amum predicted that the SAF 31st brigade will eventually leave "with some delay" if enough pressure is applied by the international community.

¶4. (C) In response to CDA's question regarding how the US can continue to help the SPLM, and what Amum thought the US should be focusing on, Amum provided several concrete proposals. First, he said the US must focus on Abyei and "drag" the NCP out of its position. He observed that pressure by SE Williamson worked to push the NCP toward agreement on Abyei. "Tell the NCP that relations can improve if the roadmap is implemented," and if we can solve Abyei, the NCP will realize that the best plan is to implement the accords. He counseled a combination of tough pressure with a willingness to deal, "they have to believe that there is a possible benefit for them in talking to you." Amum highlighted demarcation of the Abyei border as well as the rest of the North-South border as an urgent priority. Second, Amum said the US must work for a serious peace

KHARTOUM 00000954 002 OF 002

process in Darfur. On the prospects for progress in Darfur, Amum said there is a possibility of an agreement between the NCP and JEM "because after a major battle both parties feel encouraged to talk." He noted that the lesson of the CPA is that the strong party gets an agreement. Third, Amum urged that the US support "a coalition of parties against the NCP."

Amum said there is great danger if the NCP mandate is strengthened through elections. Referring to the NCP, Amum said "there is a problem with people who think they are messengers of God, touched by the Holy Ghost - this brings an arrogance of power." CDA noted that there is nothing worse than a dictatorship that comes to power or retains power through an internationally respected electoral process.

¶5. (C) As in every meeting with him, the mercurial and apocalyptic Amum predicted or used the word "war" at least half a dozen times. In reference to the recent press conference decrying the lack of press freedoms that he attended with PCP leader (and former NIF ringleader) Hassan al Turabi (ref A), Amum said that "taking away press freedoms is the beginning of war." Amum observed that the regime is more nervous than ever, not just because of the JEM attack on Omdurman, but because of the regime's fear of losing power and to ensure that it gets the result it wants in the elections. CDA observed that the regime operates as if there were a state of emergency in all but name, with which Amum strongly agreed. "It's a constant undeclared state of emergency, and the level of press freedoms has gotten worse over time," said Amum. He noted that in 2005 following the signing of the CPA there were more freedoms, but starting in 2007 the regime started to crack down, and in 2008 the regime has begun to "put a lid" on all newspapers.

¶6. (C) Comment: Amum's announcement that he will leave the GNU does not surprise us, since all of the senior SPLM figures in the GNU complain about the difficulty of working with the NCP regime and often request that Chairman Kiir allow them to return to the South. Foreign Minister Alor also wants to leave his post, but told CDA Fernandez that Kiir will not allow him to leave Khartoum (Ref B). Amum's statement that he will depart his GNU post does remind us somewhat of his claims at the SPLM convention that he would

leave his position as SPLM SG in order to spend time in the US, only to reverse course following an outpouring of support at the convention and a presumed renegotiation of his role with Kiir - which probably left Amum in a slightly stronger position vis-a-vis Chairman Kiir than previously. However, in this case there is no apparent power play and it is in fact likely that Amum would prefer to be solely Secretary General where he can play a stronger role in the party in the lead-up to elections. However the SPLM loses much by allowing SPLM renegade Lam Akol to take over for Amum in Khartoum. It will keep the smarmy Akol busy but the Cabinet Affairs Minister has a unique vantage point from which to view (and on occasion, even as the CPA junior partner, to influence GNU policy) and having a strong SPLM insider such as Amum in the position instead of an NCP sympathizer such as Akol added much to the SPLM's influence in Khartoum. As always, the SPLM is spread thin between Juba and Khartoum, with few senior figures who can take on the most senior roles. Perhaps sensing that the change is coming, senior NCP officials like Dr. Nafie and Mustafa Othman Ismail have called for Pagan's removal after his harsh criticism of a government of which he is still part. End comment.

FERNANDEZ